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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 001621

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: GOI COMMITTED TO KEEPING KARNI OPEN, WILL GET U.S.

PRIORITIZED WISH LIST OF ASSISTANCE PROJECTS

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones, Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (C) Summary: In a meeting with the Ambassador, Ministry of Defense Political-Military Advisor Amos Gilad said that he is committed to keeping Karni open despite the security risks. He agreed to get the Ambassador a prioritized list of specific assistance projects that the GOI wants to see continued despite the general suspension of aid to the PA since the Hamas takeover. He also promised to look into using frozen Palestinian customs revenues to fund medical treatment for Palestinians in Israeli hospitals. Gilad said he would seek to keep the number of cars in PA President Mahmud Abbas, motorcade at five for security reasons. End summary.

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GOI Assistance Preferences  
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12. (C) In an April 25 meeting with the Ambassador, Ministry of Defense (MOD) Political-Military Advisor Amos Gilad said he had only recently been apprised of the GOI's promise to provide a list of assistance projects the GOI wants to see continued in the West Bank. The Ambassador explained the range of USAID projects being suspended, including those involving water, waste treatment and roads, and told Gilad that GOI input into this process would assist our deliberations. He told Gilad that he had also raised the issue with Foreign Minister Livni and discussed the importance of finding ways to pay for medical treatment for Palestinians in Israeli hospitals like Augusta Victoria, perhaps utilizing frozen tax revenues. Gilad promised to consult on the list with ministry officials, but said that, given the current political situation, it is difficult to get Minister Mofaz (a lame duck) to focus.

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Current Situation in Gaza  
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13. (C) Gilad described the current political situation with the Palestinians, saying that it is important for Hamas to collapse, but not for the Palestinian people to fall. He noted that Mahmud Abbas now seems to understand the situation and finally to be taking some action. The Egyptians, according to Gilad, have sent two new generals to Gaza to represent GOE interests there. He thought that the GOE may have been behind Abbas' decision to be more assertive on control of the border (and Hamas's willingness to accept this). The GOE had made it clear to all that they did not want Hamas fighters on their border. He urged the U.S. to work with the Egyptians to be more actively involved in Gaza. Responding to the Ambassador's question on the recent reported launches of Katyusha rockets, Gilad commented that Islamic Jihad, with the tacit support of Hamas, continues to attempt to launch the rockets but were hampered by technical difficulties, with most rockets landing inside Gaza. This situation was unlikely to persist, however. If the rockets hit Ashkelon and cause deaths or damage, this would create a situation to which Israel would need to vigorously respond, he said.

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Karni Crossing to Remain Open  
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14. (C) Gilad insisted that the GOI is committed to keeping the Karni crossing open unless an attack is imminent. &We will measure the risk,8 he said, and ensure that the Palestinians are kept alive and their basic needs met. The Ambassador urged that exports from Gaza through Karni also be continued. He then described the progress of USAID-funded improvements at Rafah, including the completion of an optical fiber connection to the Kerem Shalom liaison office. He also told Gilad that he had given Minister Livni a letter of acceptance of the Customs protocol for Rafah. Gilad promised to follow up on the protocol, which he appeared to welcome.

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Abbas Motorcade  
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15. (C) The Ambassador then raised the status of Mahmud

Abbas, motorcade. Recently, Abbas had been informed that the motorcade would need to be reduced from five/six to three cars. The Ambassador asked Gilad to consider retaining the motorcade as is for security reasons. Gilad indicated that he understood and will address the situation.

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Upcoming Visits  
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16. (C) Gilad said he would be traveling to Jordan on May 8 to attend a boundary committee meeting, but more importantly, to consult with Jordanian officials and try to enhance relations. He said that Egyptian Intelligence Chief Omar Suleiman would come to Israel on a visit after the Israeli government is formed. He also confirmed that PM Olmert would visit Cairo either before or after his visit to the U.S. Gilad surmised that the Egyptians, for reasons of face, would likely press for the stop in Cairo before Washington.

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JONES